



The Board of Pensions
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Report on Clergy Recruitment and Retention

to the 216th General Assembly (2004)
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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Helping Build Church Leadership

In the spring of 2003, the Board of Directors of the Board of Pensions commissioned a Task Force of its Clergy-Directors to review literature, statistical studies, and other materials with respect to the recruitment and retention of clergy for the pastoral ministry, specifically ministry in and with the local congregation. Based on its review, the Task Force was asked to make findings and recommendations to the Board of Directors of suggested actions for the Board of Pensions. Our concern was grounded in the observation that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has suffered a decline both in membership and in the number of clergy with appropriate skills to answer the varied, and sometimes specialized needs, called for by the congregations. While we acknowledge that leadership in healthy congregations is expressed in many ways, we observe that more often than not, the pastor's leadership acts as a catalyst for the culture of faith, excitement and community that draws people to our congregations. We, along with other General Assembly agencies, are dedicated to helping build church leadership, especially pastoral leadership, for now and for the future.

Keeping Our Promises

One conclusion is certain: every Presbyterian, every church, every session, every middle governing body and every General Assembly agency has both a role and a responsibility to sustain our Ministers of the Word and Sacrament in their work and provide for on-going support and growth.

This responsibility is made clear in our Constitution by questions posed to the members of the church.

We Presbyterians make promises to our clergy at the time of their installation: these promises result from our affirmative answers to the questions posed in section G14.0510(a)(3) of our Book of Order.

Do we promise:

- To pay him or her fairly and provide for his or her welfare as he or she works among us?
- To stand by him or her in trouble and share his or her joys?
- To listen to the word he or she preaches, welcome his or her pastoral care and honor his or her authority as he or she seeks to honor and obey Jesus Christ our Lord?

Initially, we identified several issues:

- What might the Board of Pensions do, within its mission, to help keep our part of those promises?
- What might we undertake to help attract to the ministry younger, talented persons who can give many years of service to the church?
- How might we help to retain qualified persons in parish ministry?
- In what tangible ways might intentional and attentive listening serve to encourage and enable a vital support network within the connective framework of the denomination?
- How might we support our clergy so that they can provide the sort of strong, vibrant, spiritual leadership that inspires us and helps each of us to achieve and sustain the spiritual growth and contentment for which we hunger?

The work of the Task Force resulted in the following report to our Board of Directors.

The findings of our Task Force deserve the attention of all of us. While some findings may be addressed in part by the Board of Pensions, some require prayerful consideration and attention by others in the Presbyterian community. There is no simple answer, procedure or program that results in a single solution. In fact there may be many solutions: some crafted to meet local or regional needs, others crafted at the national level. Much time and considerable resources, both human and financial, are required. We strongly believe that our denomination's combined efforts will be worthwhile. We further believe our ministers deserve our best efforts. The directors of the Board of Pensions urge us all to reflect upon the simple yet profound promises we have made to our ministers at the time of installation and to search for new ways to continue to keep them.

The Board of Pensions has committed itself to design, develop and raise funds for some new programs that would address these issues. However, before we could begin the design phase, we needed to have a better definition of the problems we seek to ameliorate.

The Board of Directors of The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) believes that the report of our Task Force is a valuable and helpful step forward in defining the problems and respectfully refers the following report to the 216th General Assembly (2004) for its thoughtful consideration.

Earldean V.S. Robbins

Earldean V.S. Robbins

Chair

The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Report to the Board of Directors of The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) March 6, 2004

The Task Force affirms the good and dedicated work of thousands of women and men who have answered the call to serve as ordained Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. The church gives thanks for their faithfulness, commitment, sacrifice and leadership. So many serve the church faithfully and well. So many witness to the love and justice of Jesus Christ as they live out their calling in congregations small and large, urban and rural. We rejoice in the unity among us and give thanks to God for their witness of Christian discipleship.

The Task Force, inspired by our fellow servants, offers its findings on clergy recruitment and retention to support the efforts of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to build and strengthen pastoral leadership.

The Charge to the Task Force on Clergy Recruitment and Retention

The Task Force was established by the Chair of the Board of Directors Earle V.S. Robbins in February 2003. The Rev. Dr. Arthur E. Sundstrom, first vice chair of the Board, was asked to moderate the Task Force and all other clergy directors, including co-opted and a candidate for ministry, were invited to participate.

The charge to the Task Force focused on the recruitment and retention of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Task Force was directed to review literature, studies, and anecdotal information on this topic; summarize its findings; and recommend to the Board of Directors what, if any, responses the Board of Pensions, within its mission, could make to the issues raised by the research. Early on, the Task Force realized that some of the matters surrounding recruitment and retention issues were beyond the mission of the Board of Pensions, but should be raised so that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at large would have the opportunity to learn from the findings and make any responses it feels appropriate and necessary.

Composition and Meetings of Task Force

The following members of the Board of Directors of the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) participated in the Task Force:

Task Force Members

Rev. Dr. Jefferson K. Aiken, Jr.

Rev. Gerald (Dan) Clark, Jr.

Rev. Dr. Stephen E. Gorman

Rev. Dr. Isaiah Jones (Co-opted)

Rev. Dr. Daniel P. Junkin

Rev. Adele Langworthy (Board Class 2003)

Adan A. Mairena (Candidate for Ministry)

Rev. Dr. Arthur E. Sundstrom, Task Force Chair and First Vice Chair, Board of Directors

Rev. John P. Wilson

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey D. Yergler

Rev. Dr. Richard E. Young

Ex Officio

Earldean V.S. Robbins, Board Chair

The following staff representatives of the Board of Pensions participated in the Task Force:

Robert W. Maggs, Jr., President

Rev. Dr. William R. Forbes, Vice President, Church Relations and Corporate Secretary

Francis E. Maloney, Executive Vice President

Rev. Alexander S. McLachlan, Special Assistant to the President

Rev. Peter C.S. Sime, Director of Assistance and Retirement Housing

The Task Force held five meetings:

April 3, 2003 – Dallas, TX

July 10, 2003 – Philadelphia, PA

October 22, 2003 – Santa Fe, NM

January 12, 2004 – Houston, TX

March 4, 2004 – Philadelphia, PA

Materials Considered by the Task Force

The conclusions of the Task Force are based on the excellent work product of many institutions and authors. We sincerely appreciate the thoughtful and prayerful work of the people who contributed their time and effort in the preparation of the materials we used. A complete bibliography is listed at the end of the report.

The Board of Pensions data refers only to the number of ordained clergy who are members of the Plan. This total is 9,760. The Comparative Statistics published by Research Services lists the number of active ministers as 13,845 and this number is used by other sources. The difference is 4,085 persons who are engaged in many different forms of ministry and hold membership in a presbytery but are not currently members in the Plan.

Focus Areas

The research reviewed by the Task Force very consistently identified the following focus areas:

- stress management,
- conflict resolution,
- organizational development,
- personal health management,
- managing church finances,
- shepherding congregations,
- supporting fellow workers/staff relationships,
- understanding and reconciling family choices and exigencies,
- matching qualifications and needs within the call process,
- mentoring programs by pastors for pastors,
- support for innovative presbytery programs to provide for the shepherding and sustaining of small churches.

Findings

Recruitment

Is there a clergy shortage? There is no simple answer. There is no shortage in the absolute number of ministers to serve in current church vacancies; however, there is a shortage of pastors. The Office of General Assembly reports that there are currently 11,097 congregations and 13,845 active Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Of course, many of these ministers are serving in specialized ministries, teaching, etc. But as the statistics illustrate, there are far more ordained ministers than total number of churches, and multiple times the number of vacant churches.

However, these statistics do not take into account the reality of a shortage of clergy willing or able to serve in available congregational settings. The reasons are many, including the fact that there are fewer pastors whose job qualifications, personal needs, or professional experiences match the requirements for current vacancies. This is sometimes attributable to the skill level or personal circumstances of the candidate, the match of the candidate's experience to the particular job qualifications desired, or the adequacy of the terms of call offered for an available position. In addition to normal turnover, vacancies may arise or remain unfilled because of the culture, the location, the work environment, or the resources of the congregation itself. Small rural and urban, immigrant and racial ethnic congregations may face a greater challenge in filling a vacancy.

Additional issues also greatly impact a pastor's decision to serve a church including the availability of work for a spouse (clergy couples serving churches and dual-career couples in which the spouse is involved in a secular occupation). This is an important issue for both the financial support of the family as well as personal satisfaction and degree of professional achievement of the spouse.

Further exacerbating the problem is declining membership and a resultant decline in resources. Many of our "vacant" churches have insufficient membership to sustain a full-time (and in many instances even a part-time) pastor. As of 2002, almost five thousand of our churches have a membership of 100 or fewer members. Using the

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definitions provided by our denominational Research Services unit, that means that 45% of all congregations in our denomination “qualified as very small.”¹ The size of the congregation links directly to the congregation’s ability to call and support a pastor. In 2002, the median total contributions from living donors to these very small churches was \$34,020. While some of these churches may have revenue sources in addition to annual contributions by the congregation, this level of revenue makes it extremely difficult to financially support a pastor.² In addition, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) should continue to explore new ways to minister to communities that cannot afford an installed pastor. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) must come to terms with the reality of the inability of a large percentage of our congregations to call a pastor and then recalculate the number of true vacancies in the denomination. When examined through this lens it becomes clear that the issue of a “clergy shortage” could be framed as a membership shortage.³

The statistics concerning the number of clergy vis-à-vis the number of churches that can sustain a pastor show that, in purely numeric terms, there is no clergy shortage nor will there be one in the foreseeable future.⁴ However, these statistics should not suggest to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at large that there is no need to recruit women and men for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament. The church, now as always, is in need of gifted and capable persons to serve congregations as pastors. It is the task of current leaders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) including pastors, youth workers, sessions, professors and chaplains to identify persons who should be invited to explore God’s call upon their lives. We should always be aware of women and men who may be exploring other career possibilities and invite them to consider the ministry as a vocation. We commend The Presbyterian Pastoral Leadership Search Effort (PLSE) for its leadership in this area and urge wide support and participation in its efforts.

Retention

The second major focus of the Task Force’s work is the matter of retention. Could and should the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) do more to retain persons in the pastoral ministry? In our view, the answer to both questions is “yes.” The primary consideration for such an affirmative answer is that it is incumbent upon all of us to assure strong, experienced pastoral leadership for current members as well as for future generations. The statistical data of the Board of Pensions shows that a small, but significant, number of clergy are leaving the Plan within seven years of ordination.

This is true of both first and second career clergy. This number seems to be increasing. Between 1990-1996, the average number leaving each year in this category was 68. Beginning in 2000, the average number has increased to 96 annually. This number becomes more significant when one considers the average age of the 9,760 ordained clergy in the Plan is 50.5 and that 2,905 of them (approximately 30%) are between ages 55-65 and can be expected to retire within the next ten to 15 years. The research of Lucy Rupe shows that during the last 20 years the rate of retirement has averaged 360 per year and during last ten years the number of ordinations has been between 330-400.

Our research revealed many reasons people choose to leave the parish ministry. Some choices are based on personal and other non-job related considerations. Some choices may reflect weaknesses in our denominational gatekeeping and call processes. Some choices may reflect simple program omissions because we have relied too much on on-the-job learning for our clergy.

Historically, we have tended to blame our seminaries for any practical pastoral deficiencies. It is not clear, however, that such blame is properly placed. It is clear that blame alone does not serve to correct the deficiencies. We must all accept responsibility to help clergy be adequately prepared for the rigors and challenges of parish life.⁵

Our research identified a number of factors that contribute to retention problems. The most significant and often reported include stress, conflict, and burnout.

Stress

While “stress” is experienced in many professions, studies have identified particular situations that specifically impact pastors’ feelings about their work. The leading “stressors” are:

- Inadequate skills in managing what are perceived to be unrealistic expectations of the congregation.
- Unrealistic expectations of pastors entering a new call, especially their first call.
- Feeling lonely or isolated.

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- Inability to spend adequate time with family or loved ones.
 - Insufficient terms of call, or to state it more bluntly, inadequate cash salaries, housing allowance, travel allowances, and continuing education allowances.
- In short, the entire compensation package.⁶

Both the Board of Pensions and the church at large should be particularly concerned about stress issues. If efforts to reduce or eliminate stress are successful, there would be less need for medical and psychological assistance, thus reducing medical claims. Reducing stress improves the health of our pastors, enables them to do the work they are called to do in more satisfying and productive ways, and thus reducing the cost to the church: a “win-win” situation for all.

Conflict

Like stress, conflict is common in the modern workplace; but unlike typical workplaces, the key leader, in this case the pastor, is expected to understand and manage conflict while sometimes being the very source of conflict. While conflict in human communities will never be fully eliminated, identifying the sources of conflict enables adequate responses to be developed. Among the prime causes of conflict that pastors identify are:

- Conflict within the local church. Due to differences in leadership styles, worship practices, management issues, etc., significant disagreement leading to conflict between pastor and member may arise.⁷
- Conflict with denominational officials (executive presbyters, COM personnel, etc.). This conflict leads to a feeling of not being supported by those outside the local congregation, exacerbating issues of loneliness and stress.
- Conflict with Head of Staff or with other members of staff.
- Doctrinal conflict, which causes significant tension within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at large, is reported by pastors to be a very minor issue in their local congregation.⁸

Burnout

While the definition of burnout is imprecise and used to mean different things by different people, this term appeared in several studies and in each was considered to be a factor that negatively impacts a pastor’s work. For the purposes of this study, burnout included:

- A spiritual life/practice that is neither rich nor renewing.
- Being bored or feeling constrained by the current position.

- Feeling drained by the demands made by parishioners.⁹
- Inadequate on-going support mechanisms for pastors.¹⁰
- Receiving little satisfaction in the role/status of pastor.

Summary

While additional items could be identified as special issues and concerns of parish clergy, the three most often reported are stress, conflict, and burnout. The issue of stress must be addressed by both comprehensive, at-large strategies and individual responses shaped by particular situations. In the matter of conflict, inadequate training in practical matters of church life and administration are often identified as a cause. Burnout could be attributed to lack of skills or knowledge in self-care and the external pressures noted. Important external pressures are unrealistic demands as perceived by the pastor and the feeling of loneliness or isolation that many experience.

The Interests of the Board of Pensions

Our recommendations address two questions:

- What are the interests of the Board of Pensions in this subject matter?
- What programs, within its mission, should the Board of Pensions consider in the near term to help address these findings?

The mission of the Board of Pensions is to provide benefits and financial assistance to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) workers and their families. To support this mission, the Board of Pensions designs and administers benefits, assistance and related programs and receives, invests and disburses monies for those programs.

To the extent that Benefits Plan members, and especially Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, suffer mental and physical health problems because of working conditions, costs are increased for healthcare, death and disability benefits. This reality impacts the entire Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) because congregations share in the funding of the Benefits Plan. Further, the responsibilities assigned to the Board of Pensions by the General Assembly specifically include designing and administering a program of financial assistance to help meet needs that are beyond the scope of the Benefits Plan.

Currently, the Board only offers education programs for clergy related to financial and retirement planning. The Task Force recommends that, as funds become available, the Board of Directors consider new programs beyond financial and retirement planning as it seeks to fulfill the mission of the Board in the 21st century.

Recommendations to the Directors of the Board of Pensions

Program for Continuing Education for Pastoral Leadership

The Task Force recognizes that our seminaries, colleges, and several of our ministry units provide various forms of continuing education for pastors, church workers, and church members. These efforts continue to enrich the church and its membership in incalculable ways. However, we recommend that the Board sponsor a multi-faceted program for continuing education specifically designed for professional skill building for pastoral leaders. Every profession finds that continuing education works to the advantage of the professionals and those whom they serve; most professions mandate such education. This program, for which funding must be found, would be a central resource for pastors to learn some of those skills that are frequently learned only on the job. The courses would be designed by the Board in cooperation with other segments of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including our seminaries and colleges, synods, presbyteries, and other ministry units as appropriate. The programs featured would be constructed to help pastors deal with those situations that are often the source of retention issues for them or their sessions. Opportunities for growth in practical and professional skills would also be a key component of a continuing education effort.

We recommend that the Board sponsor a multi-faceted program for continuing education specifically designed for professional skill building for pastoral leaders.

One of the great advantages of current Board assistance programs is the active participation of presbyteries and employing organizations in both the selection of recipients and the sharing of the costs of the assistance provided. We recommend that this model should be used in the administration of the program for continuing education for pastoral leadership. In this way, the decision-making process is inherently a local one.

Wellness Initiatives

Various studies¹¹ noted that many pastors are not caring for their physical health as well as they should. The Board should continue to provide information, programs, and other responses that will encourage and enable ministers to move toward better health practices and conditions. Additionally, programs and incentives should be designed to respond to particular situations. Responses would vary depending on individual needs, location, availability of services, etc.

Information Technology

In today's fast-paced, highly technological society, the pastor finds himself or herself even more isolated if he or she does not have access to computers and the Internet. The feeling of isolation can be intense for those pastors serving in less densely populated areas of the country.

Even though there are a great number of continuing education events throughout the country, transportation and cost both pose problems for many of our rural pastors. The Board in conjunction with presbyteries and local congregations should assist churches with the cost of adding computer capability and training as well as aiding in the connection to the Internet where feasible. To further help the congregations and pastors, the Board in partnership with other General Assembly agencies should raise funds and develop the highest quality user-friendly Web site that would allow pastors throughout the denomination to access information from the denomination as well as other sources. This Web site would facilitate the access to the information from the Board concerning benefits as well as other pertinent information from agencies of the denomination. Another opportunity for the use of the Web would be the dissemination of educational information concerning many of the previously mentioned topics by on-line seminars that could be accessed in the local church.

Many pastors are not caring for their physical health as well as they should. The Board should continue to provide information, programs, and other responses that will encourage and enable ministers to move toward better health practices and conditions.

Concerns Suggested for Consideration of Others Within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Task Force recognizes that many sessions, presbyteries, synods, General Assembly entities, seminaries and other organizations are studying and addressing ways to help attract and retain persons in the parish ministry. We respectfully refer these organizations to the excellent work done by those on whom we relied during the course of our work. Subjects deserving of a new look and a special focus include the following:

More carefully discern the suitability of individuals for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament

This includes revisiting the considerations, processes and standards used during the Inquiry and Candidacy process. “Gatekeeping” occurs at many points in Presbyterian processes from Inquiry to Call. Each of these points is a focus of special responsibilities for participating governing bodies. Some inquirers and candidates are entering ministry who do not seem to have the gifts for ministry as evidenced by difficulties in their personal lives due to their work and the difficulties and conflict that arise in the churches they serve. The relatively short time they serve the church in active ordained ministry is another indicator of the lack of thoroughness in exploring the call during the time of discernment. It seems that at no point in the process were they constructively counseled toward serving the church other than as Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. It appears that sessions, Committees on Preparation for Ministry, presbyteries and seminaries sometimes passed them through the process, each hoping that some other group would exercise theological and pastoral gatekeeping. The result of our collective failure is that, at times, inadequately trained and equipped, and emotionally unsuitable ministers are serving or have served, and sometimes damaged, churches.

Review the Inquiry and Candidacy Process

We further recommend that one particular requirement of the Inquiry and Candidacy process be reviewed: the two-year under care provision. Some persons do not begin the process until their senior year in seminary, which means they are ineligible to receive a call for two years after graduation from seminary. In the meantime, they must work to provide for themselves and their families and often begin another career path. For many reasons, they do not want to abandon that other career when they become eligible to receive a call. Due to this requirement, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may be losing many fine pastors who would otherwise enter congregational service.

Examine the Vacancy Process

How do we best match qualifications and a call? How can a church realistically plan for succession of clergy within our polity? The question has to be asked if it is in the best interests of the congregation to have a vacancy that, from start to finish, can take a year to eighteen months and, in some cases, even longer. Many of our lay people find the process irritating, time consuming, frustrating and at total variance with good personnel practices.

Emphasize Continuing Education

While the Book of Order requires that at least two-weeks study leave be granted annually, it does not require that such time be used. Additionally, in most parish settings, there is little, if any, consultation between the pastor and the session, or the pastor and the presbytery, as to what subjects or skill development the pastor should pursue using the study leave granted by the church. Consultation could help identify skills that would enhance ministry in that particular setting, resulting in less conflict and more satisfaction by both the pastor and the congregation.

Taking the issue of continuing education even more seriously, consideration should be given to mandating continuing education for all pastors.

This is common practice in the helping professions (for example, physicians, nurses, practicing psychologists, social workers). Specifying which areas of continuing education are required may be left for pastors and governing bodies to decide.

Consultation could help identify skills that would enhance ministry in a particular setting, resulting in less conflict and more satisfaction by both the pastor and the congregation.

Review the Process to Call an Individual

The Task Force raises these questions for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at large to consider:

- Should some of our processes be examined to encourage creativity and flexibility in matching clergy to vacancies?
- Should the church examine and rationalize the relative complexity of the process leading toward ordination for the Minister of the Word and Sacrament with the relative simplicity of the process of commissioning Lay Pastors?

Define Compensation for Pastors

This includes a look not only at “minimum” terms of call, but “adequate” terms of call. There can be much discussion as to what “adequate” may mean, but the answers to a few questions may provide some indication: What financial resources are required for a pastor (and family) to live in the same style as does the average member of the congregation he or she serves? Does the adequacy of compensation take into account any debt that the pastor may have incurred while preparing for the ordained ministry? Do allowances for professional expenses actually cover the expense or is the pastor expected to cover the actual expense from his or her salary? We urge each presbytery to define “adequate terms of call” and work toward ensuring that all pastors receive such compensation.

Examine Support For Pastors

This includes an examination of resources and professional relationships that encourage and support our pastors by reducing stress, conflict, and burnout. In some presbyteries, the executive presbyter can serve this function well; in others, for a host of reasons, it may be wiser for another presbytery staff member or a contracted professional counselor to serve in this capacity.

The Board in Partnership with Others

The Task Force notes that the Board of Pensions cannot and should not be the sole sponsor of the many opportunities available to our church community to support our pastors as they work among us. We are aware of many innovative programs now under development in several of our seminaries, the ground-breaking work being undertaken by some General Assembly agencies, and the generosity of several foundations that provide for funding for new initiatives. We are also aware that many presbyteries and even local churches seek new ways to assist their pastors in their efforts to be faithful servants. But the Task Force has come to understand that the need is great and seems to be growing. Many opportunities and needs can be addressed by sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly and all of its entities.

The Board of Pensions is keenly aware that declining membership is a phenomenon affecting all mainline denominations. We are also aware that there are many cultural, sociological and demographic reasons contributing to this decline; however, our premise is that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in essence, has a “personnel problem” that, if left unaddressed, will soon become another contributing factor to the decline in membership. We believe the data we reviewed supports our premise. We believe we should each do our best, within our respective roles and responsibilities, to stand by our promises to our pastors, and help build the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) leadership for the future.

Certainly the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is far more than the women and men who have been called to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament, but as both scriptures declare and history confirms, without a committed, well-educated, trained, and supported leadership, neither the church of Jesus Christ nor its members will ever grow into the fullness and faithfulness God intends. Men and women continue to respond to the Call of Christ. The church must ensure they are equipped and supported in their mission.

Acknowledgements

The directors of the Board of Pensions offer their thanks to our colleagues Marcia Clark Myers, associate director, Churchwide Personnel Services, Keith Wulff, coordinator, Research Services staff of the General Assembly Council, and Lucy Rupe, executive presbyter of Winnebago Presbytery. All of these folks gave generously of their time and expertise to assist the project and made many helpful suggestions.

Beth Rutkowski and Craig Lomicky of the Board of Pensions staff provided the statistical details and information that were important to our task. Jean Hemphill provided legal advice. Deborah S. Bernard handled all of our administrative responsibilities throughout the project. They deserve our thanks and appreciation.

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Vacuum for the Seminary Graduate Turned Pastor.” 2003
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The Board of Pensions Internal Information

Random survey of 1,000 ministers of whom 750 responded, conducted by Presbyterian Research Services for the Board of Pensions Assistance and Retirement Housing Committee in 2003.

Disability Benchmark Information.

People no longer active members in the Board of Pensions Plan.

A study of active clergy between the ages of 26-65 in eight age classifications.

A study of ministers with seven years or less of active service who left the Benefits Plan between 1996-2002 and who did not retire.

Telephone Interviews

In addition, the Task Force conducted telephone interviews with persons who had recently left the active pastoral ministry to gain “first person” information concerning their decisions to enter and then leave active ministry. The methodology adopted by the Task Force was that the directors would personally call randomly selected clergy from each of the following cohorts:

- Those ordained at under age 30 who left active service within ten years.
- Those ordained at over age 40 who left active service within ten years.
- Those who left active service within seven years of ordination from any category.
- Those who served for at least 20 years and left active service within ten years of retirement.

PC(USA) Materials

Churchwide Personnel Services

Final report of the work group on the “Entrance into Pastoral Ministry.”

From Gatekeepers to Stewards.

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